

Young Lungs at Play!

Tobacco-Free Parks and Playgrounds Are Important

Many communities in Kansas have instituted outdoor tobacco-free ordinances at parks, zoos, athletic fields, playgrounds, trails and even city sidewalks and streets as a way to protect both children and the environment.

Tobacco-Free Parks Are Clean Parks

Cigarette butts are the most littered item in the world.¹

Discarded cigarettes and other forms of tobacco are toxic, hazardous to the environment and costly to clean up. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable. Small children and animals are at risk of swallowing, choking, or burning themselves with discarded butts and poisoning themselves with the drug nicotine. Tobacco waste makes parks and playgrounds look dirty and uninviting. Tobacco-free parks provide children with clean and healthy places to play.



Youth in Sedgwick County participated in a parks tobacco litter cleanup in 2017. Orange flags indicate collected litter. More than 280 cigarette butts and other tobacco materials were collected within an hour, most concentrated next to play equipment and at the playground perimeters.

Children Imitate Adult Behaviors

Every year in Kansas, nearly 1,200 children under 18 years old become new daily smokers.² How do children learn to walk? To talk? To play sports? From adults! When children see adults smoking in family-friendly places such as parks and playgrounds, they see the behavior as acceptable. Parks are about clean air, natural beauty and engaging in healthy activities. Smoking just doesn't fit in.

¹ Novotny TE, Zhao F. Consumption and production waste: another externality of tobacco use. Tob Control. 1999 Spring;8(1):75-80.

² The Toll of Tobacco in Kansas, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, Last updated November 15, 2018

Children Are Hurt by Secondhand Smoke!

Exposure to secondhand smoke has been estimated to result in more than 41,000 annual deaths³ in the United States and causes health problems in children including more frequent and severe asthma attacks, ear infections and sudden infant death syndrome.⁴

Secondhand smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals known to be harmful or carcinogenic (cancer-causing), including formaldehyde, cyanide, carbon monoxide, ammonia, and nicotine.⁵ The Environmental Protection Agency classifies secondhand smoke as a class-A carcinogen: a substance known to cause cancer in humans and many serious illnesses in children.⁶

Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are inhaling many of the same cancer-causing substances as smokers. There is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke exposure. The only way to fully protect yourself and your loved ones from the dangers of secondhand smoke is through 100% smoke-free environments.⁵

Tobacco-Free Outdoor Areas

Most Kansas adults, about 83%, **DO NOT** smoke.⁷ Tobacco-free policies that restrict tobacco use where children play help protect the health of all community members. Tobacco-free policies are public park policies similar to those prohibiting alcohol use or littering in public parks and are largely self-enforcing.

Posting adequate signage provides an opportunity to educate the community about the tobacco-free policy and allows individuals to handle tobacco use in the same manner as an alcohol or litter complaint that may occur at these facilities.

Help to prevent children's exposure to secondhand smoke at outdoor public play places. Supporting a tobacco-free ordinance in your city will make a difference in the health and welfare of all community members.



This information and more is provided in the *Young Lungs at Play!* Toolkit created by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. To view the full Toolkit, visit: www.kdheks.gov/tobacco/young_lungs.htm.

For help implementing tobacco-free parks in your community or for free signs, contact: KSSmokefree@ks.gov

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014 [accessed 2016 Nov 17].

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Health Effects of Secondhand Smoke. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/secondhand_smoke/health_effects/index.htm

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.

⁶ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Respiratory Health Effects of Passive Smoking: Lung Cancer and Other Disorders. Washington, D.C.: Office of Health and Environmental Assessment, Office of Research and Development, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1992.

⁷ 2017 Kansas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, Bureau of Health Promotion, Kansas Department of Health and Environment.